

**Rev. Bob Stelter SERMON FOR
CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY
SURPRISE**

The apostle Paul has some intriguing words about prayer in Romans, chapter 8: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.” (Romans 8:26)

If we do not know how to pray, then why should we keep doing it? Perhaps in these words, Paul is nudging us toward a new discovery.

Theologians who teach and write about prayer offer a wide variety of opinions about what happens when we pray. Some say that things will stay the way God has decided they should be and through prayer, we adjust to God’s decisions. Other say that the purpose of prayer is to make a difference in the way God decides things.

It's that great old question about prayer: Who changes in prayer, the pray-er or God?

You’ve seen the bumper stickers that encourage us to “Expect a Miracle?” God will suspend the natural flow of events to answer our prayer. With such prayer, we discover a God who gets motivated to act in a special way because of our prayer

Other teachers on prayer see the purpose of prayer as moving the person praying closer to the will of God, closer to

changing themselves rather than changing God. They encourage us to coordinate our prayers closely with will of God.

So, which is it? Does prayer change God or does prayer change the pray-er? I'd like to suggest both; that prayer changes both God and the prayer-er. Our intercession changes us, changes the world and changes what is possible to God.

With this understanding, the point of prayer is not to unlock the secret plan for my life hidden somewhere in God's mind. Rather, the point is that God has already told me the plan for my life by creating me a certain way with certain skills, passions and preferences. Prayer allows for the discovery of new possibilities as I'm in ongoing conversation with God. I like to think of it as redemption in progress.

Who changes in prayer, God or the pray-er? Maybe that's the wrong question. Maybe that isn't even the kind of discovery to which prayer leads us. Discovery does happen when we pray, but its nature is unpredictable and unmanageable.

Think of this. What would you do if Jesus walked into church and sat down next to you? After recovering from the shock, you ask, "Jesus, what do you want me to do with my life?"

Do you know what I think Jesus would reply? I think Jesus would probably say, “What do I want you to do with your life? Why don’t you surprise me!”

That’s our King. One who cares about each of us. One who wants each of us to discover ways to glorify God.

Christ is King, that is our proclamation in worship today, Christ the King Sunday. But He is a surprising, different kind of king. He is the ultimate revelation of God. He brings God down to earth.

When we think of kings, we imagine a mighty imperious dignitary, removed from us, seated on a royal throne of power. Not Jesus. Jesus is King, but He is a King who is vulnerable, humble, loving, concerned about us, wanting to be in an ongoing relationship with us, sustained through prayer and worship and service. Instead of a high throne, He is seated next to you in your pew.

+On Christ the King Sunday, I especially encourage to pray to your King. How will you ever know Him unless you spend time in conversation with Him? King Jesus wants to be involved in your life, especially in your prayer life. Consider your prayers redemption in progress.

Why don’t you surprise Him?

Amen.